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Aibiki

Rendezvous - a short illustrated story by Asato Eiri

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ほら、躯だってこんなに感度がいい——

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There's something awkward but dear about [illegible] because of his genius.... Doctor, pianist, actor [illegible] the romance of talented men.

GENIUS' LOVE

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Rendezvous 逢引 あいびき

Eiri Asato あさとえいり

Long fingers run themselves through my hair.

"Seichirou-..."

A voice, sweetly rough as though it were echoing with yearning, reaches my ears. An illusion. After all, we're not lovers.

This is a transaction. An agreement that he and I have made. Like a prostitute, I've let him use this body as he pleases.

"...hn."

I've surrendered seemingly impossible depths of this body to him.

"...Ah-h...."

...How.

How did things turn out this way...

Reeling from the savage heat, my mind drifts back to a past that I can never return to.

The beginning was, as I recall...

"You can't be serious. That's too expensive."

As I raised my voice in a back alley of the entertainment district, the man twisted his lips.

"It's fine by me if you don't wanna buy it. I'll just sell it to someone else."

"... No, that'd be a problem. If I don't have that..."

At the time, I was faced with a patient that was likely to fall into danger without that drug. I had to buy it at any cost.

"It's dangerous for me, too, selling medicine like this to an unlicensed doctor like you."

"That's—"

I kept silent and the man's face took on a rude smile.

"Why don't you pay the missing part with that body? I guess I could do it with a guy as pretty as you. Might as well go into the business."

He took ahold of my chin and pressed me against the wall. The moment the man's knee acted to part my hakama, "I'll pay for it. Please sell him the medicine."

From behind the man came another man's voice. As the man hurriedly pulled back, the other man's face became visible.

"Ah-..."

It was a familiar—no, an unforgotten face.

"... Takechi... Shigeto...?"

We were once classmates. To put it simply, that's what my relationship with him, Takechi Shigeto, was.

But during our student days, we also shared a bit of a secret.

He was a special friend.

"It's been a long time! Since you went to study abroad, hasn't it...? How've you been?"

"...Fine."

Sorry you had to see such a disgraceful side of me... Thanks for helping me out."

He moved to pass the bag containing the medicine over to my out stretched hand... and stopped.

"You really... don't have a licence?"

"Eh? Yeah... sort of..."

When will you pay for the cost of this?

"Ah, well, sometime soon...I just don't have enough on hand right now... But I'll pay it right away. You've got a general practice, right? I'll go there..."

"The money doesn't matter."

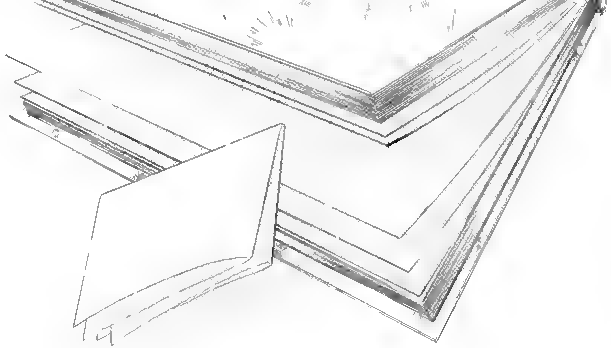
"Eh...?"

"I'll continue to pay for your medicine. In return, you'll follow the same terms that other man gave. The charges will be repaid by your body."

"...What?"

...I shivered, chilled. No response to his autocratic tone remained but to nod.

What I wanted was the medicine in his hands.



My parents ran a small medical clinic. On their first sightseeing trip, their ship ran into an accident and sank. I was still studying to become a physician then and had planned to eventually take over the clinic. Halfway through, though, I lost my parents and, without a license, all that were left to me were an empty clinic, payments that hadn't been collected, and, as a consequence... debts. Along with that came impoverished patients who had depended on my parents. Fortunately, I had some knowledge and, while tending to their medical needs and illnesses, I came to be called "Dr." though I still had no license.

I began to sleep with him as payment for the unending medical costs and some time passed.

One day, at a prearranged time and date, I made my way to Takechi's mansion. After his medical examination was brought to an end, I was shown into the study next to the bedroom and told to wait. It was the first time I'd taken a good look at this room that I normally passed by on the way to the bedroom. There was an expanse of bookshelves. As to be expected, he had a remarkable library. Gazing about, a certain book caught my eye.

"Hmm... this book. If I'm not mistaken..."

At the private school we attended, Takechi and I had been asked to take care of searching for documents in the book storeroom. I admired Takechi who was the top of the class. There was something unapproachable about him and he didn't speak much so I was happy and proud to be asked to work together with him.

"Isn't this it...?"

While looking at the spine of the book, I stepped backward, bumped into his back, and stumbled. Just as I knocked against the shelf, one of the books flew out and fell.

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah... Oh? What's this? This... it's sandwiched between the pages..."

"A letter?"

Because it was written in English, I couldn't understand it too well, but the last sentence, at least, I understood.

"Could it be a love letter...?"

He peered down at the letter, seeming to understand its content.

"I'm waiting at the top of Shibazakura hill...? Maybe it's a rendezvous? Was there a place called that...?"

"Oh, it could be that place, you know. There's that pretty hill with moss pink flowers where you can see the ocean, isn't there?"

That we went there together was in no way because we were voyeuristic.

"It's not like it was written today or like it's certain that's the place... They're probably not there."

However, for the two of us, it became our rendezvous point. There, we passed the time as close friends. Once he threw off his reserve, even Takechi, who was ordinarily expressionless, laughed with carefree abandon. It was that hill where, both knowing that we wanted to become doctors, we pledged to become wonderful physicians who would help each other. Our secret relationship continued until Takechi went abroad to study.

It should've been a sweet, unblemished memory.

I am the one who created this relationship. I, in my broken existence as an unlicensed doctor.

This isn't the way I had hoped we would aid each other... But I can no longer return to being a child when it was possible to live on untainted dreams.

Made to wait by Takechi's prolonged medical examination, I watched from the study window as Takechi's figure appeared to see off a woman who seemed to be the last patient. In the light of the gate lamps, I was astonished by the sight of Takechi's smile. It was a smile that only I saw back then. My chest ached and I found myself sad for feeling so.

Isn't this just as if I'm jealous...

It was simply painful... I thought about putting an end to the agreement.

"...What did you say?"

"I'll get my certification properly. I can't stay as I am forever... That's why... let's end this."

"The cost of the medicine hasn't be fully repaid yet. Most of it is still owed."

"That will be paid bit by bit without fail. I'm sorry that it will have to be by monthly installments but..."

"...There's a way to settle the account in one go."

The scent of an aphrodisiac fills the room. The drug that I've been made to swallow has made me unable to move.

"...hh..."

I don't know how many times I've climaxed. Pressed and cornered, I've been made to come as my body is opened. Cry and plead for mercy though I did, the shame would not end.

"...Ah-aa...h...!"

This wasn't what I wanted. I merely hadn't wanted to be treated as an object... This act of meaninglessly joining our bodies was terribly painful. If it's nothing more than sex, I'll never know how joyful it could be...

I wanted to be loved by him... the realization arrived at the edge of my fading consciousness

Am I dreaming? I thought I felt an elusive touch against my skin

When I open my eyes, Takechi has already disappeared. ...Have I finished repaying what I owe?

If I am to leave, now is probably the time. I dress myself and, as I am about the leave the room, I see the book. ...Takechi, I wonder if you remember this...?

"...Goodbye."

"Seichirou..."

He's already left.

...I shouldn't have slept with him if I was only going to let him go in the end.

Takechi sighs heavily and falls into a study chair. Inadvertently, he notices that the bookshelf door is open. He gets up and reaches out to close the door when the sight of a book flies out at him as though it's trying to tell him something. Cracked gilt lettering on the spine of the book...the sight of it brings back memories.

As he picks up the book, a single scrap of paper flutters out. He runs his eyes over it and immediately dashes out of the room.

"Bring the out the car at once!"

THE END